Prophetic Visions of the Past

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Published by The Ohio State University Press

Figueroa, Victor.
The Ohio State University Press, 2015.
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In Prophetic Visions of the Past, Victor Figueroa rigorously examines the representation of the Haitian Revolution in Caribbean literature from throughout the region. This book is filled with insightful close readings of literary texts as well as impressive explications of the theoretical implications of the argument. Scholars of Anglophone, Francophone, and Hispanophone Caribbean studies will enthusiastically welcome a book like this.

—Raphael Dalleo, Florida Atlantic University

Figueroa has provided a major contribution to understanding the legacy and contemporary character of the Haitian Revolution. Extremely well-researched and elegantly written, this book is also an extraordinary effort in bringing together various elements such as the historical, the literary, the biographical, and the theoretical in ways that are productive and that provoke further reflection.

—Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Rutgers University

In Prophetic Visions of the Past: Pan-Caribbean Representations of the Haitian Revolution, Victor Figueroa examines how the Haitian Revolution has been represented in twentieth-century literary works from across the Caribbean. Building on the scholarship of key thinkers of the Latin American “decolonial turn” such as Enrique Dussel, Aníbal Quijano, Walter Mignolo, and Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Figueroa argues that examining how Haiti’s neighbors tell the story of the Revolution illuminates its role as a fundamental turning point in both the development and radical questioning of the modern/colonial world system.

Prophetic Visions of the Past includes chapters on literary texts from a wide array of languages, histories, and perspectives. Figueroa addresses work by Alejo Carpentier (Cuba), C. L. R. James (Trinidad), Luis Palés Matos (Puerto Rico), Aimé Césaire (Martinique), Derek Walcott (Saint Lucia), Edouard Glissant (Martinique), and Manuel Zapata Olivella (Colombia). While underscoring each writer’s unique position, Figueroa also addresses their shared geographical, historical, and sociopolitical preoccupations, which are closely linked to the region’s prolonged experience of colonial interventions. Ultimately, these analyses probe how, for the larger Caribbean region, the Haitian Revolution continues to reflect the tension between inspiring revolutionary hopes and an awareness of ongoing colonial objectification and exploitation.

Victor Figueroa is associate professor in the Department of Classical and Modern Languages at Wayne State University.